



**Technical cooperation among
developing countries**

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HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON THE REVIEW
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DRAFT REPORT

Rapporteur: Mr. Naceur Gharbi (Tunisia)

Addendum

IV. SUMMARY OF THE GENERAL DEBATE

A. Overview

1. The general debate began with the intervention of the permanent representative of Guyana to the United Nations in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77. He reiterated the commitment to technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) and South-South cooperation in the context of the new and emergent realities and challenges that the developing countries will be facing in the twenty-first century. The process of globalization continues to have a profound effect on the fundamental transformation of the international economic system and to pose increased challenges to the developing countries in a number of different areas. He stated that TCDC and economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) provide the framework for and reflect the continuing commitment of the developing countries to strengthen their solidarity for the dual purpose of supporting their national development efforts and enabling their effective participation in the international economic system.

2. He made it clear that the primary responsibility for promoting TCDC and ECDC lies with the developing countries, and they must maximize the prospects of their individual and collective development. Every effort is being exerted to meet this responsibility, and it would be appropriate to document information on TCDC activities on a systematic basis and present it on an annual basis. He noted with appreciation the support provided by the United Nations system and interested developed countries in promoting TCDC and ECDC, and urged increased contribution to the Trust Fund on South-South Cooperation and the Perez Guerrero



Trust Fund. He also endorsed the framework of triangular cooperation, in which developed countries provide bilateral or multilateral financing to facilitate cooperation among developing countries.

3. Referring to the theme of the Committee at its eleventh session, "the role of TCDC in accelerating growth and equitable development through broad-based partnership", he stated that acceleration of growth in the developing countries must remain a central objective and a high priority in international development cooperation. He explained that increased differentiation among developing countries, far from undermining effective cooperation among the countries of the Group of 77, is strengthening cooperation and self-reliance since countries are learning from each other's experiences. They remain united by a common sense of deprivation and exclusion from the benefits offered by the international economic system.

4. He recorded appreciation for the catalytic role of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in promoting South-South cooperation. He drew attention to the decision of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session calling for closer integration of TCDC and ECDC in operational activities of the United Nations system. He also recognized the contribution of the guidelines on TCDC in reorienting the approach of the United Nations system in utilization of the TCDC modality. Finally, he urged the new United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) administration to strengthen and expand the activities of the Special Unit in order to enable the developing countries to realize their full potential of development. Pointing to the historical significance of the eleventh session, which has been held between the celebration in 1998 of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and the South Summit to be held in 2000, he expressed the hope that this has provided an opportunity to define a vision for the future and to clarify the elements of a strategy for international development cooperation.

5. Most member countries indicated their support for the views expressed by the permanent representative on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

6. The Minister Plenipotentiary of Germany, speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the Union and Cyprus and Iceland, confirmed the importance of South-South cooperation through ECDC/TCDC, saying that it complements traditional development cooperation. Regional integration and regional cooperation are also essential in fostering stable economic and social links, and hence deserve the support of development partners. He felt that the best way to realize the potential and maximize the impact of TCDC was to make it an integral part of national and international strategies. He expressed the conviction that South-South cooperation through TCDC/ECDC would accelerate national economic growth in the developing countries and their active participation in the process of economic globalization.

7. He suggested that TCDC's progress was largely dependent on the commitment of concerned Governments and their according priority in national programmes. It was for the developing countries themselves to take the initiative, make

decisions, ensure financing and assume primary responsibility for implementation.

8. He noted that the central target of all technical cooperation was to promote and enhance national potential and capacities. He noted that experts from developing countries are effectively utilized for development cooperation, and national responsibility and ownership of development activities is becoming more pronounced.

9. He detailed the areas of support to TCDC and ECDC provided by the countries represented by him as follows: (a) promotion of intergovernmental institutions in developing countries; (b) technological cooperation with developing countries; (c) use of training facilities in developing countries and financing experts from developing countries; and (d) support to programmes that are important in terms of TCDC for other developing countries. He also expressed support for triangular funding arrangements, and stated that the EU stresses the mainstreaming of the TCDC/ECDC modality and does not regard it as a separate area of activity.

10. Most countries considered that experience with globalization and liberalization underscored the need for collective self-reliance of the developing countries. The threat of the marginalization of developing economies warrants that priority be given to TCDC and ECDC. The developing countries need to work together to overcome their shared vulnerabilities and disadvantages, and to maximize the benefit that they can accrue from the process of the globalization and integration of the global economy.

11. Renewed concern was expressed across the board regarding the decline in voluntary contributions to development aid and the decrease in official development assistance (ODA). TCDC and ECDC alone will not be sufficient to fill in the void, and steps will have to be taken to re-establish commitment to development cooperation. It was reiterated that TCDC/ECDC is not an alternative to North-South cooperation. It is necessary to identify new sources of financing for development and set up new partnerships. Involvement of the private sector and NGOs was welcomed in this context. Renewed efforts are required to give concrete meaning to the directive of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session to review with a view to considering an increase in the allocation of resources for TCDC activities.

12. Considerable enthusiasm was expressed for the proposed TCDC Information Referral System (INRES) site, an Internet Web site on information for development. The conversion of TCDC-INRES into a multidimensional web of information was welcomed, and it was explained that it will not only provide a platform for the exchange or clarification of ideas and experiences but also serve as a database for various kinds of information, including national institutions, experts, best practices and technology profiles. It was felt that the greater use of this resource would at the same time promote and facilitate the use of developing country consultants.

13. The interactive exchange in the meeting proved to be very useful in eliciting further information and highlighting issues. It was clear that TCDC activities and successes, especially at the country level, are not being

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captured adequately in the biannual progress reports. Important focus was also given to the follow-up to the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) during the interactive exchange. TCDC activities in the field of science and technology were also discussed. Another item of considerable interest was the mainstreaming of TCDC in United Nations development system interventions. A question was raised on the additionality in the contribution of the Special Unit to the promotion of TCDC. It was stated that the policy guidance by the Committee and its implementation by the Special Unit have additive value. Further, the Special Unit is also piloting methodologies and delivery mechanisms for wider replication, and its information service is facilitating the sharing of experience and best practices. Above all, it is playing the important role of advocacy and mobilization for TCDC. There was a suggestion to document the elements of the various forms of triangular cooperation. In the course of that exchange, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), China and Japan provided additional information on some of their TCDC activities.

B. Review of progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, the decisions of the Committee and the recommendations of the South Commission

14. Most countries provided detailed information on their TCDC and South-South cooperation policies, programmes and initiatives. The United Nations organizations and agencies supplemented the information provided in the report of the UNDP Administrator (TCDC/11/2).

15. While increased awareness of the TCDC modality and greater commitment to it on the part of the developing countries were generally acknowledged, some countries emphasized the need for greater sensitization of officials in national Governments, the articulation of clearer TCDC policies, the strengthening of focal points and a larger allocation of national resources for TCDC. The issue of better coordination of TCDC policy in agencies as well as in countries was also highlighted by some delegations.

16. Some delegations described new initiatives taken by them to utilize TCDC and ECDC in a more comprehensive and focused manner. Both for provision as well as acceptance of TCDC, coordinating mechanisms involving many actors, including the private sector, have been set up in some countries. In others, focal points have been set up as executive units or special funds have been created to finance TCDC activities.

17. Some delegations referred to the recent financial and economic crisis in East and South-East Asia and elsewhere, and underscored the need for measures targeting greater self-reliance of the developing countries.

18. Most delegations considered that the United Nations development system appears to be much more committed to TCDC, and they are promoting this modality by various means. Guidelines on TCDC have proved to be effective in the promotion of the TCDC modality in the United Nations development system. Networking is considered to be a good way to exchange information and share expertise and experiences. Use of the technical resources of the developing

countries, such as training facilities, expert services and systems and practices, are being made much more extensively and with financial support from many development partners. Transfer of technology from the pivotal countries requires the active support of the development system. The mechanism of triangular cooperation has proved to be very effective for a wider application of the TCDC modality.

19. Great emphasis was placed on developing technical and scientific competence in developing countries, especially in frontier areas of technology. It was suggested that TCDC focus attention on science and technology development. The concept of multiple beneficiaries of strategic interventions of TCDC was especially mentioned for TCDC in science and technology. Attention was drawn to the value of networking and expert-level exchanges for the purpose.

20. There was a specific reference to the role of TCDC in social development. It was suggested that education, health, sanitation or housing are areas in which TCDC can be particularly effective. The overhauling of education to meet the pressures of globalization was considered by one delegation as the crying need of the hour.

21. A number of delegations from both developing and developed countries described activities under triangular cooperation arrangements and extolled the virtue of such cooperation. The return from investments under triangular arrangements was considered very substantial and highly additive. There was an appeal from many delegations for more such arrangements, particularly in view of the decline in ODA.

22. Attention was drawn by some delegations to the special problems of two groups of disadvantaged countries namely, small island developing States and landlocked countries. These countries are usually in the category of the least developed countries and are being marginalized in the process of globalization and economic integration. They are in need of support from their peers in the developing world, and programmes should be tailored to their requirements.

23. Some delegations stressed regional cooperation as an aspect of TCDC and ECDC. It was suggested that it fosters economic and social growth with stability and can be a means to faster process of economic integration.

C. Progress made in the implementation of the new directions strategy for technical cooperation among developing countries

24. Most delegations expressed a general consensus reaffirming their continued commitment to the new directions strategy for TCDC endorsed by the Committee in its decision 9/2, and felt that the strategic areas of focus, such as trade and investment, macroeconomic management, poverty eradication and the environment, provide the relevant framework for a more substantive orientation for TCDC. The delegations also expressed their satisfaction with the progress that has been achieved so far in the implementation of the new directions strategy, and expressed appreciation for the work undertaken by the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in this regard.

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25. Based on reports submitted by the Administrator of UNDP, it was clear that the developing countries have taken ownership of TCDC. It was generally agreed that developing countries are applying the TCDC modality much more in solving their development problems and providing substantially more human and financial resources for TCDC. The pivotal countries, as both contributors and recipients of technical cooperation, are taking the lead in promoting TCDC and ECDC. There was general concurrence that the primary role for ensuring an effective developmental role for TCDC rests with the developing countries themselves. It is for them to take the initiative, allocate the necessary resources for it and manage the application of the TCDC modality. It was felt that this is not only helping TCDC and ECDC but also contributing to an environment of more equitable global economic prosperity. It was felt that funds from donor countries, particularly from the Special Unit, are important, but in the end it was reiterated that TCDC needs full commitment from its main beneficiaries - the developing countries themselves - to succeed.

26. There was widespread agreement that the best way to move forward to accelerate South-South cooperation is to mainstream the use of TCDC, making more efficient use of the existing, limited resources, particularly within the framework of the new directions strategy. There appeared to be optimism among the delegations that TCDC is being brought increasingly into the mainstream activities of technical and economic cooperation. Non-governmental organizations are playing an increasingly important role in promoting and utilizing TCDC, and within the United Nations development system a growing number of agencies are successfully mainstreaming TCDC. For example, UNFPA is playing an important role in promoting TCDC approaches in the area of population development with its centres of excellence programme in developing countries, and FAO has contributed significantly to the integration of TCDC into technical cooperation activities through its four TCDC partnership programmes.

27. Satisfaction was expressed with the increasingly successful regional approach to TCDC, the growing importance of "pivotal countries" which now number 23 members, and the integration of ECDC and TCDC. It was recommended that there be a further refinement of the criteria for identifying pivotal countries to enable countries to accelerate activities in this area, and several delegations suggested ways to maximize the use of ECDC/TCDC through the promotion of intergovernmental institutions in developing countries and training in other developing countries as well as financing experts from developing countries.

28. Appreciation was expressed with regard to support of donor countries in the promotion of TCDC, and it was noted that triangular cooperation has the potential to enrich the contents and resource base of South-South cooperation through the participation of developed countries in broad-based partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Since lack of financial resources has been seen as one of the major constraints to TCDC, triangular funding arrangements should be developed through the contributions of developed countries and international organizations.

29. Some delegations felt that one of the most useful and cost-effective ways to promote TCDC is through the collection and dissemination of information on South-South cooperation among developing countries. Delegations welcomed the efforts of the Special Unit to retool INRES into a fully Internet-based system

as the next logical and strategic step in the evolution of INRES. It was further elaborated that this initiative will enable the Special Unit to use the electronic venue to greatly expand the ability of developing countries to accelerate the use of TCDC through the newly designed database. Delegations also appreciated the new format and enriched contents of the Cooperation South Journal, which focuses on critical issues and current problems of interest to developing countries.

30. Several delegations reiterated the importance of the private sector as an engine of growth. In the context of TICAD II, the Africa-Asia Business Forum was mentioned as an example of Africa-Asia cooperation, for which concrete operational results through a variety of business linkages will serve as fertile examples of South-South cooperation. There was also support for further focus on TCDC activities in the social development sector, and a concern regarding the lack of information on the status of TCDC in the areas of science and technology. It was felt by some delegations that real progress cannot be realized without scientific expertise in the equation of TCDC.

31. Finally, some delegations pointed out that the main constraints to the effective and expanded application of TCDC/ECDC remain the lack of clearly defined national TCDC policies, insufficient awareness of TCDC's full potential and importance, and inadequate provision of human and financial resources for TCDC. It was suggested that these constraints can be rectified by the developing countries themselves. Several delegations expressed the view that in order for TCDC to become a full-fledged development vehicle, it is the responsibility of developing countries to formulate coherent national policies to advance the cause of TCDC, including provision of funding from national budgets, the establishment and strengthening of a focal point mechanism and strengthening the awareness of the value of the ECDC/TCDC modality. TCDC was, after all, an enterprise of the South even though it needed support from the international community. It was felt that taking such steps would be conducive not only to the growth of ECDC/TCDC but also to an environment of more equitable global economic prosperity, which would move closer to meeting the aspirations of the developing world.

D. Consideration of reports of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

32. The delegations agreed that the revised guidelines for the review of policies and procedures by the United Nations development system were well formulated and provided a comprehensive framework for the overall goal of mainstreaming TCDC into the operational activities for development of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. It was felt that the great potential for TCDC can be more fully exploited if measures to facilitate the use of TCDC as a matter of first consideration are given special attention, not only by the organizations concerned but also by the Administrative Consultative Committee on a regular basis so that it can become more practically achievable. Recognizing the important role of United Nations resident coordinators in the promotion of TCDC, it was suggested that their role be further strengthened.

33. Several delegations drew attention to the declining resource base, citing a decrease of approximately 20 per cent in ODA. The Administrator of UNDP emphasized the need to sustain United Nations development assistance programmes with a higher level of resources in support of TCDC, and called for increased support by member States. Suggestions for diversifying the TCDC resource base included a variety of innovative funding mechanisms, such as triangular funding and linkages with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Several delegations noted with satisfaction the allocation of 0.5 per cent of UNDP's core resources for TCDC during the current programme, and expressed the hope that this allocation would be further expanded in the future. One delegation asked for an allocation of 1 per cent of UNDP's core resources for TCDC. The role of the Special Unit, particularly in providing support for the implementation of the new directions strategy, was commended by most countries. There was also unanimity among the delegations on the need to preserve the separate identity of the Special Unit within UNDP. Appreciation was expressed for the financial and technical support provided by a number of donor countries as well as pivotal developing countries.
